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# THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY

VOL. 39, NO. 3

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### Fate, Good, and Evil in Greek Thought

By WILLIAM CHASE GREENE

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

We are happy to report to our readers that the difficulties under which we have in recent weeks been laboring in connection with the publishing of THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY have now been greatly relieved. Our printer's staff has been augmented by the return of a former compositor to his normal work after an absence in the service of our country. This has greatly improved the establishment's ability to give us again the efficient and conscientious service which our publication received in the past. For this we are deeply grateful. It is the expectation that the Numbers now overdue can be brought out promptly. Naturally, every effort will be made to get back on schedule time as soon as that can be accomplished. We are sorry about the delay, but it was unavoidable.

## THE COMMUNITY, CULTURE, AND THE CLASSICS<sup>1</sup>

We educators work under a semantic tyranny in a world of words and phrases. Human habits of thought make this verbal government possible. One of the most common of these habits is to confuse the name of a thing with the thing itself, and to credit the name with the substance and power of the thing. In teaching we often confuse the name of a course with the effect that the subject-matter is supposed to have on the student. If we set up a new course in "Table Manners," that does it: students will take "Table Manners" and when they have had "Table Manners," they are supposed to have table manners. There is a logical short-circuit involved in this semantic process. It depends not only upon the deceptive inter-changeability of the name of the course and the end or thing which it represents, but also upon the peculiar perfective sense that the verb "to have" now enjoys in educational parlance.

<sup>1</sup>Condensed and adapted from an address given before the Department of Classics, Missouri State Teachers' Association, Kansas City, November 3, 1944.

## Names Make News

Thus education is estimated, not in terms of what the student has, but in terms of what he has had. If he has had the specified number of courses, he has an education; that is, if he has had 120 hours of academic work plus the necessary displays of muscularity in the gymnasium, he has a degree; he can then put an elastic around his education and shove it away in a trunk. This belief in the efficacy of names is not far removed from one of the principles of primitive magic: the knowledge and use of the right name gives power over the thing; if the curriculum contains the right names, the Superintendent and the Dean have done their work, particularly if the names, as in TIME, make news.

## Old Words and New Things

Within the past decade there has been a complete semantic shift in the vocabulary of education. Not many years ago there used to be a lot of loose talk in schools about work. It was something that students were supposed to do. Today the word is still used, but not in exactly the same way. All socially-minded forward-looking educators are anxious to "make democracy work." This is a fine phrase. But suppose we take this fine phrase and substitute the word "students" for the word "democracy," so that the phrase reads, "Make students work." It is not a fine phrase any longer. Any forward-looking educator would blush to use such language, for in this context "work" is figuratively as well as literally a four-letter Anglo-Saxon word so far as the decencies of educational vocabulary are concerned.

## Leadership?

We used to talk about building character in education; we are no longer governed by that phrase, although I am not sure that the government has changed for the better. We used to talk about developing leaders through education: the word "leader" has

developed sinister connotations, and it is perhaps safer not to intrude the need of leadership in a discussion of education in a democracy, where no one is inferior to any one else. The word "discipline" used to suggest something reasonable and healthy when applied in moderate doses; it is seldom mentioned in polite educational company today. Formerly the individual used to be highly regarded and was well spoken of in politics, in the press and pulpit. In the past decade the individual has been the victim of a masterly job of character-assassination at the hands of self-appointed liberal thinkers, so that today the individual is mentioned furtively, if at all.

### Sweetness and Light

Another word that used to be of reputable currency in educational circles was "culture." "Culture" was the mark of an educated person: it suggested good taste, refinement of person, and acquaintance with the best that had been, and was being, thought and done. These somewhat sinister aristocratic connotations, with further implications of wealth based upon exploitation, are no longer admissible in a democratic world. The word "culture" does not mean what it meant in the days of Matthew Arnold and Benjamin Jowett. The days of sweetness and light are done. But what are we who honor the old things to do in this world of new words?

### Latin is Respectable

We must, of course, persevere in our allegiance to the old things that were also good things. Specifically, on the high-school level, where the two-year Latin program is the norm today, our aim is to teach the student how to read Latin. This is a respectable aim. The curriculum that still offers Latin might pardonably be compared to the girl who does not use cosmetics, does not smoke, and does not neck: she may be old-fashioned and a little impractical, but she is certainly respectable.

The subsidiary objectives in the two-year Latin program are rich and various, a curriculum in themselves. If we state these objectives at their optimum value and assume maximum teaching efficiency—which is what we must do in all serious discussions of any subject—we may state the case for the two-year Latin program somewhat as follows:

The student may gain an historical and cultural perspective, a sense of the continuity of human experience, what may well be his only opportunity in secondary education to escape the intellectual isolationism which is the great danger of teaching only for immediate social or vocational-economic values.

The student will, at the same time, engage in some of the more narrowly defined social studies through a sketch of Roman history and Roman political experience with our own borrowings from the latter. He

will also learn something of Roman daily life, Mediterranean geography, etc. And he will engage in what we sometimes fail to define as the greatest social study of all: language. The Latin student will know something of language in general, and a good deal of language in particular. He may have his first thoroughgoing introduction to English grammar; he will be more at home in the middle and upper areas of English vocabulary; he will know how a language works, and he will know how to go about studying other languages (including his own).

### The College Program

The objectives of the two-year Latin program may be applied equally well on the college or university level, so far as concerns the student who is taking Latin for reasons of general education. There the Department of Classics has an obligation to make its facilities available to as wide a range of students as possible. The Department can scarcely claim support from the institution and the community if it does not offer contact with the Classical area both to the student interested in language, and to the student who cannot take the regular language courses because of curricular restrictions or other legitimate impediments. For the latter student the Department of Classics may offer courses in translated Greek and Latin authors, and a comprehensive survey course on the continuity of the Classical tradition with our own on the higher or university level.

You will note that the language used in stating these objectives is not that used generally in educational circles today. For the most part, they were set forth in terms current before the great semantic shift in the vocabulary of education. But if we of the classical and liberal disciplines are to maintain our place in education, *we shall have to speak to our fellow educators in terms that are meaningful and significant in 1945 and 1946.*

### The Societal Vocabulary

The semantic shift of which I spoke a moment ago has come about largely through increased activity in the field of the Social Sciences. A new science necessarily creates a new vocabulary. We have all been amused by the double-talk that occasionally emanates from departments of Education and some of the fancier Social Sciences. But let our prejudices not blind us to the fact that if we appraise these fields at their optimum value and teaching efficiency—an appraisal that we have already asked for the Classics—they have a claim to our respectful attention. These new explorations in the Social Sciences and in Psychology, which are so greatly affecting the processes of education, are, by the very nature of science, tentative, exploratory, and occasionally foolish. Their partisans often betray their own science with the claim that conclusions which are tentative and subject to proof by experiment are facts; and in social studies, talking about something is some-

times confused with studying something; but none of this gives us the right to ignore the worthy objectives of these fields and the integrity of their advocates.

On our own side, too, we must beware that conservatism, which is a good thing, is not a disguise for intellectual lethargy and intransigence. If education is to improve and progress, the Classics must progress with it through the reconciliation of extremes. We have too long confined our attention to cultural values related to the individual. Let us also consider how these values may be stated in language that is meaningful in the educational community of today.

### Education and Culture

Education in the widest sense begins at the instant of birth. From then on there is constant interplay and interaction between individual faculties and capacities, and the physical and social environment. As between the individual and the physical environment, growth is a process of successful adaptation on the part of the human organism. As between the individual and society, growth is a process of acculturation, a process of adaptation and adjustment in the cultural and social environment, which process, when it is formally organized, we also call education. In the earlier years, acculturation takes place in a narrow circle, of which the family and the home are the center. As the individual grows older, acculturation involves adaptation to the community and to society beyond the confines of the family.

Now we partisans of the liberal tradition have no quarrel with the cultural-societal point of view up to this point. There is no issue. But we are entitled to criticize the extremely narrow manner in which the process of acculturation is interpreted. This process cannot and must not stop with mere adaptation to contemporary mores plus superficial emphasis on a few selected economic and political aspects of American culture. Education properly begins with the inculcation of basic social habits; it must not end until the individual no longer needs intellectual infant's garments.

### American Culture

We must recognize the great breadth and depth of American culture and insist that every prospective citizen have the maximum degree of acculturation consistent with his individual capacity. Culture as here defined is an aggregate of customs, traditions, techniques, institutions, ideas, and attitudes—the observable phenomena of our society. American culture is basically western European and English-speaking, with valuable supplements from other cultures, notably the German, all conditioned by the pioneer-frontier environment plus the effects of modern industrialization. But on the higher level, where acculturation is the concern of the secondary school, and on the highest level, where it is the concern of the college and university, our culture has drawn so heavily from the cultural experience of

classical Mediterranean society that to ignore this derivation is to deny the student a complete education. We have too long taken this derivation for granted; we must henceforth remind the community that it exists. The fundamental questions, the basic objectives, the areas of activity of almost every departmental division on the university level, were defined in the Classical period; this cultural continuity cannot be denied even by the most arrogant partisan of the supposedly "modern" fields.

As a Classicist, I naturally like to look back before I go ahead. It is usually profitable, when we have critical business before us, to read the minutes of the last meeting. When the record of human experience is laid out, our American culture has a reasonable claim to be considered the most dynamic that the world has seen since that of classical Greece. If we are true to ourselves and our best traditions, and wise in ourselves and our leaders, we shall conquer the world. We have warred down the haughty by force of arms, but our culture, like that of Greece, may win the world and, through sheer strength and excellence, be a possession for always of the human race.

This is not the time for vocational opportunism and the narrow view of education. I give you the goal of the Classics and the Liberal Arts: *Education for citizenship in the great world—of yesterday—today—and tomorrow.*

NORMAN J. DEWITT

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY (ST. LOUIS)

### GERMAN EXCAVATIONS AT ST. AUBIN-SUR-MER (CAVALDOS)

On D-Day the New Brunswick Regiment of the First Canadian Army captured a German soldier at St. Aubin-sur-Mer(Cavaldos) by the name of Eugen Eble. In the interview this PW said that he had been sent to St. Aubin-sur-Mer as an aircraft spotter, and that he was stationed in the fortifications that lay right on the sea and north of the Rue de Verdun.

According to the PW, on his first day in walking along the communications and frontline trenches he noticed fragments of tiles and pottery. Having studied at the University of Freiburg in Breisgau under Professor Kraft, he was able to recognize these pieces at once as Roman. He made sketches and notes of the wall tracings, pavements, two wells, and pottery fragments, as well as graves. An order had gone out from the German military commander in France that all such finds should be reported, but Eble, knowing Professor H. Möbius, head of the Archäologische und Vorgeschichtliche Abteilung in Paris, communicated directly with him and was freed from his duties and given permission to excavate the site, with the assistance of two to five men from the French Labor Corps enrolled for the construction of coastal fortifications.



Eble stated in his interview that on the basis of his finds, the place was first settled in the Middle Stone Age, but the first big development came in the second century A.D., when a Celtic temple was constructed, the statue of which, "a work of sculpture of international importance" was found in one of the wells. Eble traced other establishments, such as an assembly hall and a bathing basin, and came upon a number of other antiquities. Then he found that in the beginning of the Fourth century considerable changes were made, and a Roman country villa was built, with a tower and a large divided hall to the east of the temple, and various paved walks. Later, at the end of the Fourth century, with the introduction of Christianity, the temple was abandoned, the statue was mutilated and thrown into the well, and the temple was incorporated as part of the villa, which was completely rebuilt, with a second tower and entrance hall. At the same time the entrance hall was also rebuilt into a bath and with various appurtenances. The grounds of the villa were enclosed by a wall. Six more buildings were traced out to the west and south, and proof of further extensions of the settlement were obtained by the discovery of traces of a Roman wall in the sea.

Finally the settlement was burned and the buildings were levelled, possibly during the Saxon invasion. The Franks established a graveyard here during the Sixth and the Seventh centuries, of which forty-five graves were excavated and their contents recorded.

Eble left three boxes of fragments, skulls, drawings, and plans with Mme. Labarbe at St. Aubin-sur-Mer, with whom he had lived while he was excavating. Important finds of *terra-sigillata* he sent to Caen, as well as the important temple statue. His manuscripts and drawings he sent to the Zentralmuseum in Mainz.

It is probable that Eble will publish his findings after the war, as he intended to do. Meanwhile it seems appropriate to record in these pages both the fact that these excavations were made and also the unusual conditions under which they were accomplished, and how they first became known to the outside world.

CAPTAIN MARVIN CHAUNCEY ROSS, USMCR

#### AN ILLUMINATING EXAMPLE OF HOMEOPATHIC MAGIC

Among savages there is a widespread belief that by eating parts of animals, or even of human beings, they may acquire the virtues, such as speed, courage, strength, and wisdom, that are supposed to reside in those parts. Conversely, primitive people refrain from eating animals that have undesirable qualities, such as timidity or slowness of foot or wing.

Classicists will recall that Medea renewed the youth of Aeson by infusing into his veins a decoction con-

taining, among other things, the liver of the long-lived deer and the head of a crow that had lived nine generations.<sup>1</sup> Another aspect of this form of magic is seen in the action of would-be diviners in swallowing the hearts of the crow, the hawk, and the mole, which are mantic animals.<sup>2</sup> Eating the flesh of the nightingale, a wakeful bird, conduced to wakefulness or sleeplessness.<sup>3</sup>

The principle behind such magical beliefs is simple, and countless examples of them have been given<sup>4</sup> but I think that the lengthiest and most realistic one I have ever seen is worthy of the attention of Classicists, even if it is used only in connection with Ovid's story of the rejuvenation of Aeson. Illustrations from the living present do help to bridge the gap between antiquity and today. In a volume called *Heaven Below*<sup>5</sup> (pp. 136-137), written by a man familiar with Chinese customs through long years spent in the mission field, there is a passage which has to do with the sale of parts of a wily leopard that was hunted down by one of his friends. It runs as follows:

'The *lao-hu* was hung by the hocks from the heavy carved beam of a village house above the doorsills facing the court. He was cut open down the middle. Each organ was carefully removed and laid out on a board. The skin was then laid back until it was held only by a narrow strip along the backbone. Then the sale began.

These country people regard *lao-hu* as the most efficacious of all medicines. The richest man in China is the proprietor of the famous "tiger balm," good for anything and made from vaseline and pulverized tiger's bones—and possibly other bones as well. Every part helps a part, it is said; and since the tiger or leopard possesses every physical virtue, to eat the part that is the seat of a particular virtue in the tiger promotes the same virtue in the one who partakes. The heart, the seat of the leopard's great vitality, brought two dollars. Each lung, the source of his stamina, was worth a dollar. Three whiskers, with which the animal scents out danger, would be tied together with a piece of red yarn and worn around a child's neck and would always keep him from harm. For another dollar the addition of a claw, with which the tiger protects himself from any danger that comes in spite of the whiskers, would make a perfect talisman.

A one-inch piece of the tendon of Achilles, the seat of the leopard's agility, cooked to a broth, would strengthen the hill dweller for mountain climbing.

<sup>1</sup>Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7.273-274.

<sup>2</sup>Porphyry, *De Abstinencia* 2.48.

<sup>3</sup>Aelian, *De Natura Animalium* 1.43.

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, Sir James G. Frazer, *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild* (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1935), II, 138-153.

<sup>5</sup>New York, Prentice Hall, 1944.

The meat, each pound of which costs sixty cents, soaked with a power house of blood, was a general tonic. The bones, my friend said, would go to a medicine shop in Hangchow, where they would be boiled continuously for three days and three nights, until a thick gelatin rose to the top. This was really essence of tiger and had all the virtues combined. It sold for a dollar an ounce. What was left of the bones—lifeless lime—was ground into a powder to make tigerbalm.

All in all, my friend received about three hundred dollars for his work.'

EUGENE S. MCCARTNEY

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

### LATIN AND THE NAVY V-12 COLLEGE TRAINING PROGRAM

As a Classicist drafted into college administration under wartime pressures, not the least of which was lack of student demand for the Classics (and lack of students!), I have been interested in observing the effects, if such can be traced, of the study of Latin upon the records of students in the Navy V-12 Program.

Therefore I have collected statistics for a representative group of trainees enrolled in the Whitman College Navy V-12 Unit. It should be noted that candidates for the V-12 Program are a highly selected group; requirements for continuance in the Program are rigorous and exacting. Curricula are almost entirely fully-prescribed, and the academic load averages three semester hours more than the normal fifteen hours, with concentration in Mathematics and Physics. A few members of the group studied had opportunity to take one or more electives, but none chose Latin; the majority followed a fully-prescribed curriculum. Thus any Latin taken by any of these trainees was at the high school level.

The group consisted of 350 trainees enrolled in the Whitman V-12 Unit between July, 1943 and June, 1944. Of this group 35% had had at least one year of Latin in high school, the average being two years. The median academic grade point average for the entire V-12 group during this period was 2.41 (4.0 is a perfect average). The median academic average for the Latin group was 2.50. Of the ten men ranking highest in the Unit at the end of the first and second terms, in both instances six, or 60%, had taken Latin previously. Separations from the Program for academic failure during this period averaged 15% of the Unit. Yet only 6½% of the Latin group was so separated.

I realize that it is unsafe to draw any final conclusions from such evidence, tempting as that may be. Nevertheless, I think that here is a definite indication that students in the Navy V-12 Program who have had

Latin achieve higher academic averages in general, fail less frequently, and make outstanding academic records more frequently than those without Latin.

It may, of course, be suggested that the explanation for this record lies in the possibility that these Latin students were of better-than-average intelligence in the first place, and that thus Latin did not contribute to their higher achievement. This *may* be the explanation, although it would be difficult to establish. Furthermore, there is some evidence to the contrary. Sixty-two members of the group in question were assigned to the Whitman Unit in March, 1944 and were given a number of entrance tests at that time by the College. These sixty-two are typical in all respects of the entire group; eighteen of the sixty-two had had high school Latin. In the American Council on Education Psychological Examination for College Freshmen, which was part of the test battery, the eighteen made an average total score of 72 percentile; the average total score for the entire group of sixty-two was 68 percentile—hardly a significant difference. This Psychological test is designed to measure scholastic aptitude or general intelligence, with special reference to the requirements of most college curricula; and therefore, to the extent that its results are trustworthy, the inference is clear. The difference in general intelligence between the Latin and non-Latin students was insufficient to account entirely for their difference in achievement.

Wherever the final truth may lie, I believe that at least we may say that the study of Latin did these boys no harm; and as a Classicist I maintain that it did them great good.

CHARLES J. ARMSTRONG

Director, Navy V-12 College Training Program,  
Assistant Professor of Classics.

WHITMAN COLLEGE, WALLA  
WALLA, WASHINGTON

### HOLMES, POLLOCK, AND THE CLASSICS<sup>1</sup>

The publication of the two volumes of correspondence of Mr. Justice Holmes and Sir Frederick Pollock<sup>2</sup> has been one of the literary events of the late war, for it showed the record of a long friendship between two of the most prominent legal authorities of England and America, a pair of brilliant minds exchanging ideas over a space of sixty years. Lawyers knew both Holmes and Pollock, Holmes for his brilliant decisions and wide legal knowledge, Pollock as a great theo-

<sup>1</sup>Cf. with this article another one by the same author on Lowell and the Classics, CW 38.11 and 12.

<sup>2</sup>*Holmes-Pollock Letters: The Correspondence of Mr. Justice Holmes and Sir Frederick Pollock 1894-1932*, ed. by Mark De Wolfe Howe, 2 vols., Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1941.

retical lawyer and legal historian. But their letters, while dealing much with law and cases, show them above all as men of a wide and deep culture, both omnivorous readers and penetrating critics. Their isolated position in society might have made them conservative and pedantic, but they both maintained a remarkable contact with what was going on in various fields in England and America.

When one perceives the wide reading of Holmes and Pollock it is not surprising to see that much of their culture comes from a long acquaintance with the classics. Both of them read the newer books on the ancient world and its thought; both read and admire J. A. K. Thomson's *Greeks and Barbarians* and Zimmern's *Greek Commonwealth*; Pollock reads Bann's *Rationalism*; Holmes would rather read Livingston's *The Greek Genius and its Meaning to Us* than Plato; and there are numerous references to, and discussions of, Windelband's *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Boissier's *Cicerón et ses Amis*, Reinach's *Apollo and Cultes*, Mythes et Religion, Frazer's *Golden Bough*, and Gardner's *Six Greek Sculptors*. Both men read widely in modern literature both English and foreign, but they seem to turn most often (and to an increasing degree as they grow older) to the classics. But the classics are not only the *oblectamenta senectutis*; when both are young lawyers their letters show a wide acquaintance with the Classics.

The Classical references in the correspondence provide an interesting commentary on the problem of the Classics in translation. The Loeb Library is used extensively by both Holmes and Pollock and there are numerous comments on the quality of various translations—Gilbert Murray's Greek tragedies and comedies, Headlam's and Conington's Aeschylus, Munro's Lucretius, Rogers' Aristophanes and Welldon's version of Aristotle's *Politics*. Both Holmes and Pollock read widely in translation, but they could always go back to the original and compare it critically with the translator's version. Perhaps the American Holmes is readier to use a translation than is Pollock. He sometimes feels that the original is a waste of time. When he reads the Clarendon Press translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, "no Greek alongside", he comments: "I don't think it worth bothering about the Greek, for the profound insights are familiar and the rest is taken up with sophisms to which it is enough to say 'pooh-pooh'."

That was in 1921, and years before he had remarked, when Pollock sent him his *Leading Cases Done into English* with numerous Greek verses of his own composition in it, that he himself was "once a tolerable Grecian" but reads now only Aeschylus and the *Iliad*, both with a "pony." He quotes the Frenchman's answer when asked if a gentleman must know Greek and Latin: "No, but he must have forgotten them". About the same time, in 1885, writing about Greek

literature, Holmes says: "Aeschylus is the only one I have any articulate ideas about worth mentioning, and these hardly so. I think it is true that the Classics are dead (saving all just exceptions and allowances). An enormous amount of knowledge is necessary not to 'dilate with the wrong emotion' or at least to get the nuance of feeling which the writer had and meant to convey".

There is no doubt that that is true: for the non-professional student of the Classics the professional texts seem ponderous and detailed and a good translation makes the main elements available to a larger number. But it is well to remember that the remark is made by a man who *did* know Latin and Greek and who *was* "a tolerable Grecian" (Holmes was modest) and who, like the Englishman to whom he was writing, could always compare the translation intelligently with the original and could read Aristophanes and the *Odyssey* with ease and penetration. There is a vast difference between being able to use only a translation and being able to compare the translation critically with the original text.

Which was the more capable Classicist? Probably Pollock. Holmes refers to Pollock's "devilish readiness for any idea in any language" and Pollock's letters fully confirm the truth of that remark. He has the well-trained Englishman's ability to compose good Latin and Greek prose and verse and he tends to read the original more often than the translation. Holmes perhaps oversimplifies classical life and thought. He finds all Greek thinking, and of course Homer especially, fresh, simple, and unencumbered by complexities. Pollock replies: "If you think the Classical poets are wanting in subtlety, read Verrall on Euripides; about two-thirds paradox to my mind, but always brilliant". If today we would not choose Verrall to illustrate Classical subtlety at its best, we at least appreciate what Pollock means. Yet there is much to be said for Holmes' view. Classical thought and writing can and should be just as fresh and appealing to the amateur as they are interesting in a different way to the professional scholar who can trace the development of each idea and each word into its last detail. As Holmes knew, scholarship *can* sometimes be an encumbrance; yet in another letter he remarks with surprise "how little we really understand Greek drama, philosophy, and the 'meaning of their key words'."

Much of the comment on Roman law in the correspondence is highly technical and could interest only legal historians, but Holmes' remark when he reads the *Nicomachean Ethics* for the first time is illuminating. He finds that numerous concepts of English law seem to have their source in Aristotle or are at least in the same tradition.

There is sometimes a sign of his father's wit in Holmes. Punning on Pollock's name he says, "I would

that you would write πολλάκις (do you get it?)."

Finally in 1928 Holmes quotes an interesting tribute to the Classics from an American philosopher: "I was talking yesterday with Morris Cohen, a most learned and able philosopher, and he said he went back and reread the Classics, being apt to feel his time wasted on modern books".

So Holmes and Pollock, too, men distinguished in the English-speaking world as lawyers and men of culture, men who were always very busy and lived extremely full lives, find sustenance and entertainment in the Classics and pay the Classical authors the best possible tribute, that of reading them and assimilating their thought.

EDMUND G. BERRY

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

## REVIEW

**Trilussa. Roman Satirical Poems and their Translations.** By GRANT SHOWERMAN. 185 pages. S. F. Vanni, New York, 1945. \$3.00.

Grant Showerman, who is commonly identified as a classical 'vulgarisateur', is less known for his more creative work, such as this posthumous production.

It is necessary and salutary now and then to realize that the classical tradition has been substantially continuous down to our own day. Trilussa is an instance of this classical stream in its satirical manifestations. Following the Phaedrus genre of irony by animal indirection, and in line with Martial's amazingly modern zest and finality, Trilussa used both Roman devices—which are essentially one—for his contemporary satire.

Trilussa is the pen name of Carlo Salustri, who was born in Rome in 1873 and all his life associated himself with the capital. He is preeminently the nationally popular humorist. From his prolific production, running into thousands of pages of sonnets and 'fables', Showerman selected and translated, over an extended period of years, representative pieces to illustrate Trilussa's skill and his gift for satirical wit directed toward the Romans and their mores.

Trilussa, like Terence, takes all human affairs for his province. The urban life of Rome is his microcosm, and within this circuit he finds for his dissection all types of human foibles and perversions, exposing greed and treacheries among petty tradesmen and swaggering generals, salesmen, beggars, and social aggressors; sparing neither rank nor position. Trilussa employs Phaedrus' assumed naïveté in his animal personifications. The Man and The Wolf, The Death of the

Cat, The Patriot Chicken, The Moralistic Dog all maintain a placid tempo, only ruffled by the sting of the social or political innuendos. Along Horatian lines is The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse, with an O. Henry twist.

What is of prime interest to classicists, apart from the content, is the sense of intimate association, derived from contact with Trilussa's favole, with the old indigenous Roman satire tracing from Lucilius and Varro with his farrago of prose and verse and subject down to the Silver Age perfection that made Quintilian so proudly assertive on the Roman originality of satire.

Linguistically, the language of Trilussa is of import, notably in view of the present global awareness of language stimulus. Trilussa uses *romanesco*, the specialized dialect of the capital. *Romanesco* has a fondness for clipped words, for omissions of syllables, contractions, changes adapted to the Law of Ease, for neologisms, for old expressions with altered sense. It is, in fact, a highly esoteric language within a national language, like Parisian argot, which has its own syntax, vocabulary, and phraseology; or like the Japanese of Tokyo, which does dogmatic things with Japanese pronouns, idioms, and the kana syllabaries.

Showerman's translations are nervous, pointed, and effective, keeping the sharpness of the original. An analysis of *romanesco* might conceivably be a good starting-point for a more detailed and comprehensive comparative study of the development of national 'argots' in the major languages. It would reveal, as the present reviewer has found out, that there are remarkable affinities in language development in non-related linguistic families—affinities that spring from the innate affinities of all human methods of speech-building.

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## PLUTARCH AND A LINCOLN ANECDOTE

The well-known story that Lincoln once proved his case in court from the almanac, showing that the moon actually did not shine on the evening involved, as had been claimed by the opposing party, finds its prototype in the anecdote told by Plutarch, Alcibiades 20: the witness in the Hermocopidae process claimed to have recognized the perpetrators of the outrage by the light of the moon; the defendants proved that the day was *bene kai nea!*

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